

Governor Bush's Amendment 9 Implementation Plan

Over the last 12 weeks, the Governor has made a concerted effort to outreach to all of the key stakeholders within the K-12 education system. In meetings with principals, teachers, urban and rural superintendents, amendment proponents, members of school boards, the leadership of the teachers' union, parents and students, a series of basic concepts have emerged.

Based on these discussions, the Governor's implementation plan for Amendment 9 will include four key principles to maintain the administration's highest goal of rising student achievement:

- Clarity – plan should have clear goals
- Flexibility – plan should provide districts with flexibility to reduce class size
- Equity – plan should maintain equity among districts
- Accountability – plan should hold districts accountable for meeting the reduction goals

STEP ONE: CLARITY

- Set *clear* definitions and ground rules for districts:
 - What is the definition of “average?” Average would be calculated as a **district** average with three measures (i.e., district average Pre-K through 3, district average 4-8, district average 9-12)
 - What is an “extracurricular” vs. “core” course? “Core-curricula courses” would include: math, language arts/reading, science social studies, foreign languages, ESE, ESOL, and traditional self-contained elementary classrooms. “Extracurricular” courses would include physical education, fine arts, vocational courses, etc.
 - When will the district average be calculated? The district averages will be calculated every October, during the regular student membership survey. (February counts will only be used, if a district does not meet its two-student-per-year reduction goals by the October count).
 - When will the baseline be counted? Just for the 1st year, the baseline for the October 2003 count will be February 2003.
 - Are charter schools included in the class size requirements? Charter schools, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate in Education, dual enrollment courses, and the

Florida Virtual School are alternatives to traditional public schools and will not be included in the definitions for inclusion in class size reduction.

- Provide school districts with *clear* district goals for reduction of two students/year.
- Implement *clear* statewide policies that also provide *flexibility*, including:
 - Streamline the teacher certification process to expedite certification of qualified individuals.
 - Require districts to implement adjunct educator certification to expand the number of available teachers.
 - Extend DROP program from 5 to 8 years to encourage teachers and school administrators nearing retirement to remain. School districts must approve of the extension.
 - Require the Department of Education to review and the State Board of Education to amend any unnecessary rules relating to school construction (minimum square footage requirements, minimum acreage requirements, etc.) that will provide more flexibility in school construction.
 - Require school districts to periodically update the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) when new classrooms come on-line or as unsatisfactory space is removed.
 - Repeal s. 1013.21, F.S., relating to the goal to reduce 20 year old relocatables.
 - Require all new schools built to meet established cost guidelines.
 - Repeal the provision that requires districts to build small schools.
 - Remove the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in each district.
 - Include the Florida Virtual School in the FEFP and expand its enrollment to assist with class size reduction.
 - Require school districts to notify parents of the options for their students to participate in dual enrollment and in on-line high school courses.
 - Provide districts with flexibility to use their categorical funds.
 - Require school districts to hold public hearings to review the utilization of existing schools and determine if changing attendance boundaries will improve facility utilization.
 - Eliminate the requirement that the ½ credit for life management must be taken during the student's 9th or 10th grade year – allow the course to be taken any time during high school.
 - Change the number of hours counted as one credit to 120 hours to provide districts with greater scheduling flexibility.
 - Repeal the requirement that districts must employ a district director for career & technical education if they employ 15 or more career & technical instructors.

STEP TWO: FLEXIBILITY

- Provide districts with a *flexible* “toolbox” of ideas to use to accomplish the two student reduction. Districts must consider, but are not limited to implementing the following:

- Adopt policies to encourage qualified students to take dual enrollment courses at community colleges.
- Adopt policies to encourage students to enroll in courses from the Florida Virtual School.
- Repeal school board policies that require students to have more than the state-required level of 24 credits to graduate from high school.
- Use methods to maximize use of teachers such as changing required teaching loads and scheduling of planning periods; deploying district employees that have professional certification to the classrooms; using adjunct educators; or other methods not prohibited by law.
- Use innovative methods to reduce the cost of school construction by using prototype school designs; using SMART Schools designs; participating in the School Infrastructure Thrift Program; or other methods not prohibited by law.
- Use joint-use facilities through partnerships with community colleges, state universities, and private colleges and universities.
- Adopt alternative methods of class scheduling, such as block scheduling.
- Redraw school attendance zones to maximize use of facilities while minimizing the additional use of transportation.
- Operate schools beyond the normal operating hours to provide classes in the evening or running more than one session of school during the day.
- Utilize year-round schools and other non-traditional calendars that do not adversely impact annual assessment of student achievement.
- Implement Florida Learning Access Grants. The grants will provide parents with options that include attending a private school.
- Review and consider amending any collective bargaining contracts that hinder the implementation of class size reduction.
- Any other approach not prohibited by law.

STEP THREE: EQUITY

- Create the Classrooms for Kids operating categorical fund that maintains *equity* with an emphasis on teachers.
 - Funds are distributed to districts based upon FEFP formula to maintain *equity*.
 - Districts that do not yet meet the maximum class size requirements have *flexibility* to use the funds in any lawful manner to reduce class sizes *while giving priority for the use of the funds to hire or compensate teachers*.
 - Districts that meet maximum class size requirements will have *flexibility* to use the funds for any lawful operating purpose, *while giving priority to using the funds to increase teacher pay*.
- Provide facilities funds through:
 - **Classrooms for Kids** bond program (\$2.2 billion provided to all 67 school districts, with emphasis for those with rapid student growth).

Classrooms for Kids facilities funds will be distributed based upon the 1997 Classrooms First distribution formula. Districts will be able to use the money for new construction, renovation, relocatables, etc. *Districts that already have met the class size requirements of the Constitution (18, 22, 25) can use the cash portion of their facilities funds to supplement teacher salaries.*

- **Small County Assistance Program (\$30 million** to assist small and rural districts.)

Districts that participate in the Special Facilities Construction Account will be able to participate in this program.

- **School Infrastructure Thrift Program (Add \$100 million** to the SIT Program to encourage continued functional, frugal school construction).

Districts that build schools below the statutorily required cost per student station receive awards based upon 50% of the savings.

- **District Equity Recognition Program (\$500 million** fund to reward school districts that maximize their local fiscal resources by recognizing voted revenue).

The District Equity Recognition Program will distribute a portion of these funds each year for 5 years to districts that are utilizing voted revenue (i.e., levy ½ cent sales tax, 1 cent local government infrastructure tax, voted millage). Funds will be distributed each year based upon the proportion of each district's voted revenue.

STEP FOUR: ACCOUNTABILITY

- Beginning in 2004, provide ***accountability*** by requiring districts that have not met their two student per year reduction goals to implement any of the following:
 - Rezoning
 - Double sessions
 - Year round schools
 - Florida Learning Access Grants (class size school choice grants)
- Beginning in 2008, provide ***accountability*** by granting authority to the State Board of Education to design and implement a class size reduction constitutional compliance plan for districts that do not meet the constitutional class size limits (18, 22, 25). The plan could include a combination of the accountability measures listed above.